

March/ April 2024

The specialist international magazine for theme parks and FECs

# InterPark

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**Project Profile**  
**Mercury Tower flying**  
**motion theatre**

**On the Cover**  
**Indoor Amusement**  
**Attractions**

**Open to Question**  
**Chloe Hausfeld**  
**TEA**

MACK RIDES PRESENTS

# TWIST ,N' SPLASH



TØNNEVIRVEL



Interactive water action now is available for water parks - the Twist 'n' Splash features a water battle that is perfect for all ages. The free floating barrels pass by the many water cannons surrounding the ride and everyone is becoming part of the action. Learn more about Tonnevirvel and other attractions of Mack Rides at [www.mack-rides.com](http://www.mack-rides.com)



## Welcome to the Mar/Apr issue of InterPark!

Welcome to the March / April issue of InterPark which, ahead of the peak Spring / Summer operational season, brings you an insightful editorial on the wonderful world of indoor amusement theme parks and attractions.

With a host of digital distractions at our fingertips, it's no secret that families are seeking new ways to foster connection and make meaningful memories. And, despite rising costs and budget restraints, it would seem families are more likely, post-lockdown, to allocate a larger chunk of their budget to experiences that include entertainment and active play for all ages. But how do operators offer versatility and enriching experiences to such a broad demographic, especially when the venue itself can pose a number of logistical challenges? Our new Features Editor, Emma Bilardi spoke to some of the leading suppliers in the indoor amusements sector to find out the positives and challenges of indoor amusements and ultimately, why operators should embrace them...

Elsewhere in this issue, you can read our Open to Question interview with Chloe Hausfeld. I caught up with Chloe after she was recently appointed Global Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Themed Entertainment Association. Chloe shared with me some of her career highlights to date; why she fell in love with this industry; and how it really is about the people you meet and the relationships you form that make it all worthwhile.

We've also got all the latest industry news and launches, as well as a project profile from David Whitworth on the Mercury Tower flying motion theatre ride from Simworx in Malta.

As always, enjoy the read

*B Whitaker*

Beth Whitaker Editor

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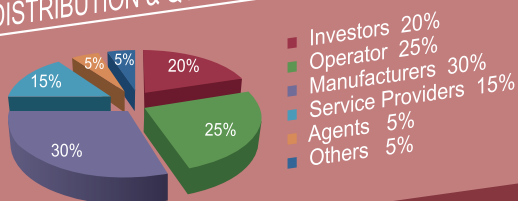


# 遊樂界 ASIA ATTRACTIONS



INDUSTRY NEWS · PROJECT REPORTS · INSIGHT

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# Australasia News

The latest news and announcements

## 1 VEKOMA UNVEILS JUNGLE RUSH



Vekoma has revealed a world's first coaster feature for a ride located at Dreamworld, Queensland in New Zealand.

Known as **'Jungle Rush'** it will be the first switchback coaster "with the ride design supporting multiple cycle paths," confirmed Vekoma.

A differential ride path is an innovation that will enhance riders' enthusiasm therefore Vekoma will be delivering one of fans' most-wanted ride elements.

Riders will travel onboard a decorated mine train vehicle in which Dreamworld says, "will offer a fun, heavily themed and unique experience to everyone from younger generations to grandma and grandad!"

Jungle Ride will feature the world's first inclined turntable, as well as immersive theming and storytelling. Riders are in for a treat with 12 airtime elements, travelling both backwards and forwards, as well as enjoying a show feature.

Dreamworld has invested £18m into the family-thrill attraction, which is slated to open in the southern hemisphere in time for the school summer holidays this year.

Jungle Rush will be located in the re-themed Rivertown land at Dreamworld.



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# Europe News

The latest news and announcements

## 1 MAURER RIDES UNVEILS SPIKE WATERFIGHT COASTER

German roller coaster manufacturer Maurer Rides has unveiled the latest creation of its **Spike Coaster** series model: The Spike Waterfight coaster. Much like Maurer's Spike Coaster, riders of Spike Waterfight can control elements of the ride themselves by altering the speed of the vehicle with a throttle on the handlebar and enjoy a speed boost thanks to a special boost button. The twist of being a water roller coaster consists of a water slide ascending and descending an impressive tower. After some fun twists and turns, at the end, riders on board can squirt water at guests waiting on the platforms of the slides using their water cannons. However, guests in the queue line and from multiple platforms of the tower can get their revenge by soaking guests actually on the ride thanks to water guns perfectly positioned to return the favour - a full on water warrior battle is born. The tower can be built up to 30-metres (98ft) high and cover a distance of 250-metres (820ft). The water attraction lasts for 40 seconds and reaches a top speed of 40km/h (25mph) with a maximum acceleration of 1.2g. The Spike Waterfight can accommodate up to 440 riders per hour thanks to its four vehicles.



## 2 NEW APPOINTMENT AT MERLIN

---

Merlin Entertainments appoints Linda Zou as Chief Strategy Officer.

Zou will report directly to CEO Scott O'Neil and work closely with the rest of the Executive leadership team in designing and executing the company's strategic vision. Zou will also lead the business in building industry-leading capabilities in core functions.

Zou joins Merlin from Boston Consulting Group (BCG), where she was a Managing Director & Partner in London, leading the development and execution of business strategy, commercial transformations, proposition design, and artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced analytics programmes for leading consumer companies in the UK, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Upon her appointment, Zou said: "This is a dynamic time for the leisure and entertainment industry. Customer sentiment and tourism patterns are evolving. New technologies bring new opportunities for innovative guest experiences. Advanced analytics tools can make it easier for frontline teams to respond effectively to the market.

"I am excited about the opportunities ahead for Merlin, as we bring more data-driven insight to enhance our guest experience, strengthen our core commercial capabilities across the portfolio, and expand our avenues for growth. Merlin has a fantastic set of assets and a passionate, experienced team, and I look forward to working with Scott, the Executive team, and broader Merlin community to grow our brands and bring memorable experiences to even more guests around the world."

## 3 DANSE MACABRE TOPS OUT AT EFTELING

---

Construction of the new Efteling attraction Danse Macabre has reached a landmark with the topping out of the 20-metre-high scare attraction.

"We are really investing in the future. The highest point of Danse Macabre nicely symbolises that," said Koen Sanders Director Product, Marketing & Image at Efteling. "In line with our vision for our themed areas, we are building a completely new area in one go. Inspired by the iconic Spookslot, we are adding a creepy experience with an extra dimension to Efteling. Danse Macabre's spectacular ride system is also unique and has not yet been built anywhere else in the world. I am extremely proud of the entire project and look forward to autumn 2024."

Jeroen Verheij, Designer, added: "It's great to see my sketches being brought to life. With great attention to detail, inspired colleagues are working every day to realise this special attraction and associated theme area. Today is literally a high point for Danse Macabre. Autumn 2024 is



Image: Merlin

CEO Scott O'Neill, Merlin Entertainments said: "As Merlin transforms into a premium positioned, innovative and data driven company focused on driving enterprise value, we will continue building capabilities to be world class in dynamic pricing, optimising trade, exploring the future of branded accommodation, maximising retail opportunities and investing in technology to drive efficiencies. Linda is the perfect executive to lead our organic growth plans and ambitious plans and trajectory.

"She will be an instant value add to Merlin as she brings a wealth of experience and expertise in strategy, innovation, and transformation in the retail and travel sectors which translates directly into our business and allows her to hit the ground running. This is an exciting time to be at Merlin and it just got better with Linda coming onto the scene."



slowly approaching, and I cannot wait for the creepiest piece of Efteling."

Danse Macabre consists of a large 18-metre diameter turntable, topped by six smaller turntables. There will be six choral benches in which a total of 108 guests take a seat. The large turntable will rise, tilt and fall, spinning like a coin before falling flat. The 20-metre-high attraction building is located in a new 17,000m<sup>2</sup> mystery-themed area with catering, retail and entertainment.

# Europe News

The latest news and announcements

## 4 HISTORIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN LEGO GROUP, HASBRO AND MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

The world-renowned **Peppa Pig** will celebrate her 20th anniversary with a historic partnership between Lego Group, Hasbro and Merlin Entertainments, uniting to bring the beloved character to life in a Lego Duplo form of Peppa Pig.

The collaboration will see Peppa Pig come to life in Lego Duplo form for the very first time in Lego products, as well as attractions and rides in Merlin theme parks. Moreover, the three brands will introduce new ways for preschoolers to engage with the celebrated Peppa Pig character.

The first experiences will launch this year in Germany and Denmark, including the world's only Lego Duplo Peppa Pig area at Legoland Billund and the brand-new Peppa Pig Park in Gunzburg in Germany, situated next to Legoland Deutschland Park.

The theme park experiences will bring to life the Lego Duplo Peppa Pig sets, iconic scenes, and characters from the TV show in real-life Peppa adventures.

"This is an exciting step forward for two of our iconic partners, whose purpose is to entertain and educate through creativity and play," said Scott O'Neil, CEO, Merlin Entertainments.

"We've partnered with the Lego Group for over 18 years and the power of the brand, across borders and ages, is

unparalleled. We're really proud to bring Hasbro's Peppa Pig to life with the Duplo brand, beginning with our new Peppa Pig Theme Park in Gunzburg and our Legoland Billund Resort, as our guests make life-long memories and learn through play."

Now in its 10th season, the Peppa Pig animated television series has been running for 20 years in over 180 territories. The brand connects with consumers across multiple markets, from entertainment and retail to theme parks and touring shows.

"For 20 years, Peppa Pig has leaned into storytelling that reflects the real lives and first experiences of preschoolers around the world," commented Casey Collins, President of Licensed Consumer Products, Hasbro.

"With kids at the centre of the brand, we recognize the importance of working with best-in-class partners to deliver toys and experiences tailored to her littlest fans. Lego Group and Merlin share in Hasbro and Peppa's goal of designing play experiences specifically for little ones, giving children the confidence to treat every first step as a new adventure and confidently jump into all of life's muddy puddles."

Meanwhile, Robert Cardazzo, Design Manager, Lego Group added: "Peppa Pig is hugely popular and Lego fans have been asking us to do a partnership for years, it was only natural that the world's most popular pig needed to come to life in buildable Lego sets, so we are excited to finally make that happen with the amazing team at Hasbro. Peppa is known for her confidence, ability to express herself and adopt new skills. She handles everyday tasks and obstacles with curiosity and charm and inspires children to be patient and learn to share. Toddlers can be creative with the Peppa sets and play out stories with the iconic figures, while they learn about caring for nature, friendship, and daily routines. It has been a joy bringing Peppa to life in products and we hope our Lego Duplo Peppa Pig will create laughs and joyful moments wherever she goes."



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# America News

The latest news and announcements

## 1 SMASH & RELOAD MAXI LAUNCHES



Triotech and BoldMove have introduced **'Smash & Reload Maxi'**, a new format of the award-winning media dark ride family.

The ride blends digital and physical elements into an immersive experience. At IAAPA Orlando, the original Smash & Reload, which debuted at Le Pal as 'Champi'Folies',

## 2 UNIVERSAL EPIC UNIVERSE REVEALS THEMED WORLDS



**'Five Immersive Worlds. One Amazing Theme Park'** is how Universal Epic Universe has described its forthcoming theme park, which is slated to open in summer 2025. The creative team behind Universal Epic Universe has revealed the five worlds which will make up Universal Epic Universal: Celestial Park, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter - Ministry of Magic, Super Nintendo World, How to Train Your Dragon - Isle of Berk and Dark Universe. Fans of the series of Harry Potter and Mario and Co. will have a new home to enjoy the delights of the worldwide popular figures.



was recognised as Best New Product at the IAAPA Brass Ring Awards.

Smash & Reload Maxi takes the attraction to the next level covering 315m<sup>2</sup> with a robust throughput of 600 people per hour, "making it the ultimate choice for medium-sized and larger parks," state the creators.

The player is at the centre of this ride with adapted gameplay to their skill levels and high scoring to ensure repeatability. The arrival of Smash & Reload Maxi coincides with the launch of a new IP: Voodoo Festival. Intelligence has been incorporated into the gameplay to create "a surprising experience, even for the most accustomed player."

In this newly launched IP, mysterious magic has brought voodoo dolls back to life. Players are the last line of defence to save the Mardi Gras festival from their total takeover. They have to fling their 'Good Luck' bags to break the curse and save the day. While being a family ride, it can also turn into a scarier experience for Halloween events.

The Smash & Reload family now includes three versions. The Maxi, the Original, and the Mini.



'Universal Epic Universe changes everything. Explore astounding worlds beyond anything you've experienced before,' states Universal Studios on what will be its fifth theme park.

Universal Epic Universal is currently in construction with work taking place on a host of attractions, rides, restaurants and hotels. Once complete, Universal Epic Universal will join the likes of Universal Studios Japan and Universal Studios Hollywood in welcoming popular IPs to its park.

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# America News

The latest news and announcements

## 3 AN EPIC ARCTIC ADVENTURE AWAITS THROUGH 'PENGUIN TREK'

A frost-tastic roller coaster is heading to SeaWorld Orlando this spring: **Penguin Trek**

Guests will be able to brave the icy themed ride onboard the aptly named Penguin Trek. "This will be the coolest research mission you've ever joined!" beamed SeaWorld upon its unveiling.

The family launched coaster adventure will give riders a taste of Antarctica in all its arctic glory. As revealed at the IAAPA Expo in Orlando, the train for Penguin Trek is themed as a snowmobile with skis adorned onto them featuring arctic cool blue designs.

A trek onboard Penguin Trek will travel up to 43mph (69km/h), navigate many twists and turns and narrowly escape the hazards of an icy cavern. A joyous journey will lead to an amazing finale: a real penguin habitat!

"This experience will culminate with a trek on foot through the heart of SeaWorld's own penguin habitat, where you'll be face-to-beak with the real penguin colony," said Jeff Hornick, vice president of attraction design and development for SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment. "Non-riders will still be able to see the penguins as well," added Hornick.

The ride will pass through both indoor and outdoor elements and includes two launch systems, all of which have been designed by Bolliger & Mabillard. Its height requirement of 42ins (107cm) means that children can enjoy a ride along its 920-metre (3,020ft) track.

InterPark discussed the icy ride with Conner Carr, corporate manager of rides and engineering for United Parks & Entertainment.

### Can you describe the process of naming the ride Penguin Trek?

"This great new attraction was designed and intended to provide an incredible family experience as well as highlight one of our guests' favourite animals in the park, penguins! We wanted a name that conveys the experience the guests' can expect as they board the vehicle and head off on an expedition ending with our incredible penguin colony, and we felt that Penguin Trek does just that."

### How long has Penguin Trek been in the pipeline for?

"We have been working on bringing this great new family attraction to our guests for several years now."

### What can guests expect from a ride on board Penguin Trek?

"Our guests will embark on an Antarctic research expedition to study penguin colonies on this harsh continent. After exploring the research base queue, our guests depart on snowmobiles into the Antarctic wilderness. From atop an icy cliff, the riders look out over an expansive seascape with penguins beyond. However, their journey quickly becomes a perilous one when the ice all around them starts to rumble and cave in, prompting the ride to launch out of the building into a thrilling series of twists and turns."

### What were the challenges faced when creating an indoor / outdoor ride concept with penguins present?

"Our animals' well being is always at the forefront of every project at SeaWorld. When Antarctica was first built, the ride



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# America News

The latest news and announcements

and exhibit shared some of the same cooling and lighting systems, so the entire first phase of construction for Penguin Trek was to isolate the penguin exhibit from the rest of the building. There are some very sophisticated lighting systems in our penguin habitat that aim to recreate the Antarctic light cycle, which we could not disturb, so this was a delicate process. Throughout all of our construction, just like with all of our animal habitats at SeaWorld, we have provided our animals with daily quiet hours without disruptions, and we've maintained that during Penguin Trek too. Designing this attraction within an existing building has been a logistical puzzle too: designing our guest flow into a seamless rider and non-rider experience was a unique challenge. "There are also some challenges with our ride occurring both indoors and outdoors. We did a lot of lighting studies early in the project, because we want some of our ride scenes to be very dark and need lighting control for our show systems to appear properly. We also had to make some material changes to our indoor show scenic after studying the effects of humidity entering through the ride entry/exit doors."

## How was the snowmobile train design devised?

"The creative intent for the snowmobile was to create a sleek, modern design that is slightly futuristic. It was a challenge



to create a large snowmobile that holds 18 passengers that still reinforces the storyline of our guests adventuring on this vehicle across an Antarctic wilderness in search of a penguin colony. Even our youngest guests will appreciate the wide panoramic views that these trains provide. The colours of the track and column were specifically selected to complement the ice work and rockwork in the Antarctica realm and give it an icy look compared with our other aquatic themed coasters throughout the park. The trains will follow along this icy track throughout the ride experience."

The penguin themed attraction will be the third coaster to open in three years at SeaWorld Orlando, following the openings of Ice Breaker and Pipeline the Surf Coaster. Penguin Trek promises a fun arctic ride for all the family and at the same time serves as an educational tool to raise awareness of the colony of this most majestic of arctic animal.





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# China News

The latest news and announcements

## 1 FIRST WOOD / STEEL HYBRID COASTER HITS CHINA

Experienced ride manufacturer **Great Coasters International** is building its first wood and steel hybrid coaster in China.

Called 'Mad Racers' it will be located at OCT Xiangyang's Kunlun Fantasy Land. Riders will be full of excitement as Mad Racers tops out at 86ft (26.2m) and reaches speeds up to 49mph (78.9km/h). The hybrid coaster will travel around a track of 2,590ft (789.52m), while its maximum track angle will be 49.5° and a maximum banking angle of 67.2°. The coaster will utilise two trains with each one carrying 24 passengers. Great Coasters International is excited by the prospect of creating its debut hybrid attraction with the twisted ride combining a steel support structure with a wooden track layout.

Olivia Hain, Director of Public Relations at GCI said of the record-breaking ride: "The hybrid of wood and steel structure makes a superior layout of a ride that has never been experienced before, and guarantees strong visual appeal, high-thrills, and nonstop fun. The ride is located in the Kunlun Fantasy Land of the park. KunLun is the most





important sacred mountain in Chinese mythology. Above the snow line is a glacier that does not melt all year round. The glacier area reaches more than 3,000sqkm. and is one of the largest glacier areas in China.

Clair Hain Jr., President of Great Coasters International, gives further scope on Mad Racers

**What can be expected onboard Mad Racers?**

“Expect disorientation, lots of speed, and feeling like you’re riding on a luge ride. It’s definitely a wonderful ride. It has lots of speed times for a small ride. We hope once this ride opens that we get more opportunities to build hybrid coasters. Working with steel is fairly new to our team but so far has been very successful.”

**How do you feel about building the first ride of its kind in China?**

“We are so excited and grateful to be the first manufacturer to build a hybrid coaster in China. We are hoping for more opportunities to build hybrid coasters not just in China, but all over the world.”

**What were the challenges of the build?**

“Since Covid, shipping has been a pain between delays and the cost of materials has increased exponentially. As well as this, getting visas to get into China was, besides shipping nightmares, probably the most frustrating part of the process.”

**How was it working with OCT Xiangyang’s Kunlun Fantasy Land?**

“They are great people and hard workers. We have worked with other OCT parks before and always come out with a great relationship and another plan to build more GCI coasters in China.”



**When is the ride scheduled to open?**

CH: “There isn’t a definite date for opening just yet, hopefully in the summer/fall.”

The opening of the very first hybrid coaster in China represents a game changer for the Chinese visitor attraction market. And its riders will feel the roar of the coaster whizzing around the track as Great Coasters International is proud to unleash a furious thrill ride sending riders ‘crazy’ from this ‘Mad Racer.’

# Asia News

The latest news and announcements

## 1 IMMERSIVE THEME PARK OPENS IN JAPAN



**Immersive Fort Tokyo**, which opened on 1 March, becomes the world's first fully immersive theme park.

It features a European-style interior consisting of 12 attractions with European and Japanese backgrounds as well as various restaurants located inside a 30,000sqm venue in Odaiba, Tokyo Bay, which is Tokyo's entertainment island. The Fort includes a theatre experience lasting one hour, a horror experience and an impressive show that takes place inside a restaurant. The unique attraction can be found alongside Odaiba's vast shopping outlets while its multi-purpose complex is filled with entertainment, retail stores and restaurants.

The location of Immersive Fort Tokyo in Odaiba is very different now to how it was - the islands were joined by landfill and developed into a futuristic city from the 1980s. In the late 1990s, a monorail link, the development of hotels and attractions turned the district into a major tourist attraction.

Immersive Fort Tokyo will blend the worlds of films, anime and gaming to tickle the entertainment juices of its visitors. Creators of the immersive experience promise thrills a plenty: "If you could enter an experience not as the

observer, but as the protagonist... That succession of dramatic moments, not shared with anyone around you but uniquely yours, creating endless thrills and excitement that burst up from the depths of your heart. A day spent here is not just any day out of the ordinary; it is a dramatic day that will totally change your life. Get ready for the world's first immersive theme park, Immersive Fort Tokyo."

Immersive Fort Tokyo is inspired by London's interactive theatre shows, dating back to the 2000s. One of its principal immersive attractions comes from England's capital: 'The Sherlock - Baker Street Murder Case'. Guests will encounter a murder mystery in pursuit of the suspect, either alongside Detective Holmes or on their own. The stage recreates Victorian London, and the mysteries that the famous detective became involved with. It is a walkthrough immersive theatre, where you can immerse yourself in the world of the popular Sherlock Holmes. "As you walk around this world, you are drawn into a number of simultaneously occurring experiences that you can only encounter in those particular places or moments," explains Immersive Fort Tokyo. "Immerse yourself completely into a grand story of novel-like proportions, and realise... are you the sleuth who solves the mystery? The victim? Or... the suspect? When these shocking conclusions and experiences that are utterly unique to you come together, the surprise will make your heart stop, filling you with emotions and thrills."

Another immersive attraction is the 'Jack the Ripper Horror Maze', with Immersive Fort Tokyo stating that, "you're transported to London 135 years ago, where you'll witness a murder by the notorious Jack the Ripper. Inadvertently you become his next target, which means you need to escape the maze before he catches up with you."

'Immersive Stories' is an immersive walkthrough attraction that will "astonish you with the hidden truths deep within stories you thought you knew." This experience enters the world of Hansel and Gretel, created in 360° video and dynamic sound.

From a Japanese persuasion, 'Tokyo Revengers Immersive Escape' derives from the 'manga' comic book serialisation in Kodansha's Weekly Shonen Magazine. Tokyo Revengers became a smash hit with over 70 million copies published with 31 volumes in all. Meanwhile, 'Oshi no Ko Immersive Rally' is also based on a manga comic book serialised in Weekly Young Jump.

Tokyo Disneyland in Japan, is set to premier a new castle projection show commencing on 20 September with performances twice a day.

The show will take place at Cinderella Castle and feature special effects of projection mapping, lighting enhancements and pyrotechnics.

It will be the first Tokyo Disneyland nighttime show since the 'Celebrate' 35th anniversary show back in 2019. It is expected that characters from Walt Disney Animation Studios and Pixar Animation Studios films will perform.

## 2 TOKYO DISNEYLAND UNVEILS CASTLE PROJECTION SHOW





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# Middle East News

The latest news and announcements

## 1 WORLD'S FIRST OIL THEMED TOURIST ATTRACTION 'THE RIG'

"Adrenaline has a new name: The Rig., an epic offshore destination," is how a new oil themed tourist venue has been described.

Situated in the heart of the Arabian Gulf, this new playground aims to take adventure tourism to a whole new thrill level - the world's first adventure tourism destination on an offshore platform. It is inspired by the design of offshore oil platforms with a firm vision to be 'the world benchmark for providing a one-of-a-kind hospitality and adventure experience on sustainable oil platforms in the middle of the sea.'

The Rig is located near Juraid Island and Berri Oil Field in the Arabian Gulf, 40km (25 miles) from the coastline. The overall floor area for The Rig. will exceed 300,000sqm featuring three hotels with a total of 800 rooms and 11 restaurants.

The Rig will host more than 70 attractions and extreme activities, both above and below the sea: E-Sports centre, cinema, kids centre, F&B outlets and retail. It will also feature an amusement park, splash park, extreme sports and adventure park, water activities centre, diving centre, multi-purpose arena and an edutainment centre in the shape of an immersive theatre. No opening date has been set yet for this ambitious Arabian project.

The Public Investment Fund (PIF) is to oversee The Rig Project, while one of its portfolio companies, Oil Park Development Company (OPDC) was established to lead its development. It is in line with the PIF Strategy 2021-2025 to diversify and enrich the Kingdom's tourism and entertainment experiences, increase tourism and entertainment investment, and diversify the economy. The Rig will play an important role in that aim as it is projected to become a key tourism and entertainment destination in the Arabian Gulf.

The attraction is aimed as a seasonal destination for short holidays, weekends, and day trips, a destination for cruise lines between the Kingdom and the Gulf countries (GCC). Guests will travel to The Rig via two onshore terminals located in Dammam City and Jubail Industrial City. Its unique means of transportation to and from there will include fast ferries, private yachts, helicopters and seaplanes.



The Rig will offer a wide variety of hospitality, leisure, entertainment, and accommodation options to a varied target market including extreme sports and adventure lovers, those interested in oil and gas heritage, yachting and cruise line tourists, families, and relaxation seekers. The Rig aims to attract more than 900,000 annual visitors by 2032. Peak daily visitor numbers are expected to reach 10,000 during the high season while daily visitors are estimated to reach 5,000 on weekends.

Raed Naim Bakhriji is Chief Executive Officer of Oil Park Development Company (OPDC), with its first development project, The Rig. "We promise to create the new frontier of adventure inspired by Saudi Arabia's rich oil heritage," said Bakhriji. "The Rig will generate new opportunities, jobs and attractions in the Eastern Province, in line with Vision 2030."

Raed's long experience in the energy industry, along with his ambitious vision for reimagining the adventure tourism sector has earned him this unique appointment. Raed has more than 23 years' experience in the oil and gas industry. After qualifying from the Colorado School of Mines, he became an engineer at Saudi Aramco. Raed then gained further experience at international energy companies including Schlumberger, where he worked as a Field Services Manager in Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kazakhstan. Before joining PIF, Raed took time to investigate new business trends - exploring the possibility of transforming The Middle East's industrial heritage into a thriving tourism destination.





He learnt about the new technologies that will have the greatest influence on visitor attractions and monitored the value shift in terms of customer demand from material goods to unique experiences. As a consequence, Raed's vision and savvy business acumen led to his appointment leading The Rig project.

The Rig offers a unique destination for a one-of-a-kind experience, which simultaneously highlights Saudi Arabia's oil heritage. The visitor attraction will combine an industrial

setting, which is synonymous with oil and gas, with the comforts and facilities of an adventure destination. A lot to live up to for PIF and its mission to "build sustainable tourism destinations on oil platforms in the middle of the sea, mixing warm hospitality and extreme adventures offering an unprecedented experience for our guests from around the world."

The Rig promises to be the ultimate adrenaline-filled venue for travellers who crave unique experiences.

## 2 SUCCESSFUL IAAPA MIDDLE EAST TRADE SUMMIT

IAAPA has celebrated a successful Middle East Trade Summit 2024 on Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, with 400 attendees and 45 exhibitors taking part.

The summit was organised by Miral, and the Abu Dhabi Exhibition Convention and Exhibition Bureau, in which the event hosted two days of insightful education sessions featuring 27 international experts. The summit included workshops and sessions discussing the latest trends and product innovations in the industry.

The Middle East Trade Summit opened with a welcome keynote address by Mohamed Abdalla Al Zaabi, Group CEO of Miral. Additional speakers included Scott O'Neil, CEO, Merlin Entertainments, Ahmad Hussain, COO, Dubai Holding Entertainment and Don Potts, President, Qiddiya Investment Company.

Moreover, there were further industry leaders participating from the Department of Culture and Tourism: Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi), The National Aquarium Abu Dhabi - Al Qana, Atlantis Resorts, Majid Al Futtaim, Saudi Entertainment Ventures (SEVEN), amongst others.

The popular EDUTours took trade visitors to Yas Island's theme parks and attractions, enabling them to gain valuable insights into the operations and creative processes behind these leading attractions. The visitor attractions included SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi Ferrari World Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi and Yas Waterworld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi.

The Summit also presented the inaugural edition of the IAAPA Ride Safety Report, specifically tailored for the Middle East region.

IAAPA announced it will be expanding its presence in the region with a local office in Dubai and appointing Ahmed Zakaria as the Director of Operations for the Middle East "I am excited to have Ahmed join the IAAPA team and look forward to exploring new opportunities in the Middle East by having a local office available to interact with members and industry partners," said IAAPA EMEA Executive Director and Vice President, Peter van der Schans. "Our education and trade events have grown significantly in recent years, and this is evident even today as we host the 2024 Middle East Trade Summit in Abu Dhabi with 45 exhibitors and 400 attendees."

# Waterparks News

The latest news and announcements

## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

### ICON TOWER RISES IN QATAR

Qatar has made significant strides in terms of its tourism development since the new millennium. And another landmark is towering above the country in the shape of Icon Tower.

The new iconic attraction opened in January and is located at Meryal Waterpark. The tower reaches a mammoth height of 85-metres (260ft) and is the proud holder of two world records: tallest water slide in the world and the most water slides on a single tower with 12 slides. The waterpark as a whole is the focal attraction of Qatar's Qetaifan Island North development. The tower contains 12 slides with two on each of the tower's six levels - and park enthusiasts will need to take a lift to get to the top.

Waterpark constructor WhiteWater was tasked with the build. The company gave a first viewing of its new Icon Tower attraction at last year's IAAPA Expo Europe in September, with the manufacturer demonstrating a model of its innovation during the event.

Reflecting upon the impressive water attraction, Mike Rigby, GM & Regional Vice President, Middle East & India, details the Icon Tower.



Mike Rigby, Regional Vice President Meryal Water Park.

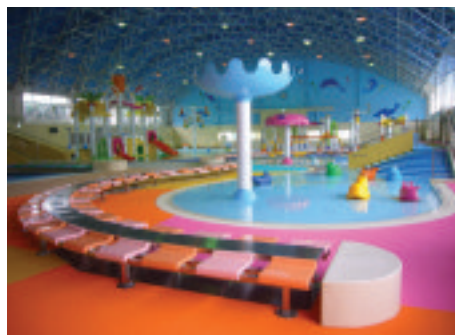
#### What are the origins of the Icon Tower (Rig 1938)?

"Leading real estate development company, Qetaifan Projects, was founded in October 2017 to build cities of sustainable and intelligent infrastructure to support Qatar's long-term economic vision. Their first project was the creation of Qetaifan Island North - Qetaifan Projects first and main development is Qetaifan Island North; a distinct island featuring a state-of-the-art water park, luxurious hotels, and world class facilities that make it a modern, globally competitive community with a unique design that is inspired by the rich culture and nature of the region.





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# Waterparks News

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## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

“This thriving waterfront hub represents a thrilling new way of life, as well as a symbol of vision, insight, and aspiration to develop into an internationally recognized landmark location and Qatar’s future iconic destination. Not only is the development of a 360° city complete with schools and a medical centre, but at the heart of the development is Meryal Waterpark – a water park with the world’s tallest water slide tower – the Icon Tower. Located off Lusail City, Qatar, Qetaifan Island North spans approximately 1.3 million sqm, with 129,296sqm of water park. Meryal Waterpark brings to life 53 water slides themed to match Qatari culture and their heritage in the oil and gas industries.

“The origin story was created by Atkins, an engineering and design company who built the narrative of Cedric Ponsonby-Smythe, the eccentric British geologist, who had been sent from the UK to Qatar to join the search for oil. During his search Cedric is introduced to an island by Abdullah, a loveable but rascally trader who offers his services as a guide. The two stumble across oil in their travels causing Cedric to set up a local partnership called QATOIL Co. between the local Sheikh and the UK. When drilling 100-metres into the ground, some local children strike water, and before long the island is submerged and transformed into an oasis. Cedric sees the children splashing around and enjoying the water and decides to stay on the island and spend his time creating wacky water rides from oil company scraps that he finds on the island.

“Adirondack Studios brought the story to life, designing elements of the water park to fit the story, giving the water park’s island the name Rig 1938 as that is when the oil search in Cedric’s story began. From the different slide towers to the vegetation in the park, there’s plenty of nods to the water park’s origin story if you look close enough.”

### What were the complexities of the build?

“Some of the complexities of the build include the wind load and the suspension of the slides on the 85-metres (260ft) structure. Due to its location on Rig 1938, Meryal’s island portion of the water park, the slide tower does get direct wind from the Persian Gulf. Unprotected from the wind, WhiteWater’s engineering team conducted a comprehensive Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) analysis on the Icon Tower to support the installation team in the assembly of the water slides. Given the unique geometric layout of the Icon Tower not covered by readily available design standards, the CFD analysis model spanned 120 million elements to determine the steady-state wind-induced effects from 36 different directions taking measurements in 10° increments around the tower. The focus was on examining local spike pressures, wind-induced vortex-shedding behaviour,



and potential undesired vibrations, with a meticulous comparison of the absolute maximum stresses against fibreglass allowables to ensure a structurally sound and safe design.

“A second regional consideration that went into the project was temperature. Because Qatar reaches temperatures of up to 45°C in the summer season, the engineering team were mindful to include heat vents on several of the enclosed water slide features on the tower to let hot air out to keep the inside of the slide comfortable and safe for riders. Using a convection system, the heat vents let hot air out without letting cold air in while keeping the attraction dark to not take away from the guest experience of surprises that lay ahead. “One of the main rides on the tower is the Abyss water slide, recognised as the largest funnel slide in the world. The WhiteWater team calculated how to suspend the attraction from the side of the tower at 40-metres (131ft) high - four times higher than the standard height of an Abyss. Weighing up to 20 tonnes (18,143kg), the Abyss required careful planning to get the fibreglass up in the air as the Icon Tower is subjective to a high wind load, requiring careful planning and consideration from the team as they work onsite to secure the slides onto the main structure.

“In addition to the structure’s height and location on the water, the Icon Tower also posed a complexity in the build as the team were working on existing complex steel framework. Because of this, the installation supervisors had to use 3D modelling to figure out how big of lifts they could



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preassemble on the ground, and at which angles and access points, so they could identify where to install the fibreglass amongst the steel. The Icon Tower was only easily accessible from two of the structure's four sides, so the installation team partnered with

rigging specialists both on the ground and on the tower to lift the pieces and help feed the fibreglass through the steel frame. Most of the installation work was done prior to the pedestrian elevators being in operation so you can imagine the number of steps climbed by the team!"

#### **Is the Icon Tower a unique water attraction?**

"One of the most ambitious and challenging projects in WhiteWater's 44-year history, the Icon Tower is the first vertical water park of its kind. Winning a 2023 MENALAC Award for Most Unique Concept, the slide tower features 12 different attractions with three kilometres of slidepath woven around the structure's steel frame. It is also the first water park to feature three pedestrian lifts to help bring guests to the top of the structure. While the lifts helped to create a natural way to get people to the top of the tower, the engineering team had to get creative around how to get guests to the next ride in their journey to the bottom of the water slide tower. The resulting feature was the use of two water-filled stainless steel transition tubs to facilitate seamless rider transfers between different slide sets. This design enables guests of the water park to enjoy a 'choose your own adventure' experience where riders can leisurely navigate onto the conveyors before being dispatched onto the next set of water slides. This enhances the overall experience of the attractions on the tower as visitors can travel the duration of the water slide, enjoy the tight 90° turns with panoramic views from the island before smoothly floating onto the next set of rides.

"While the amount of fibreglass wrapped around the tower makes it eye-catching, the other aspect that truly demonstrates that the Icon Tower is a unique water attraction is that no two slides on the tower are the same. The WhiteWater engineering team calculated 12 unique slide paths so that each high-banking turn and gravity defying hump will catch riders by surprise. The tower also incorporates technology to enhance the guest experience using projections inside of the upper Abyss to display

different sea creatures in its funnel section. Provided to the park by iSlide, the technology adds visual and audio effects to make for a fresh ride experience."

#### **What was it like building such a diverse water attraction?**

"We often find the community around the new water park are highly anticipating the project opening, but what was special about the Icon Tower is that the entire industry was eagerly awaiting its opening, and that's quite special. The level of engineering and detail required to create the structure is no small feat and shows the calibre and level of excellence of WhiteWater's engineering and installation team. The density of the attractions intertwining and co-existing alongside each other is something that will make this project a real iconic destination for tourism in the Middle East. It's been inspiring to see how the vertical water park concept has quickly caught on with another one on the way in China at M100 Water Park and the United States at Mt. Olympus Water Park.

"The project management team on the ground was made up of four senior installers so each member of the team has one side of the structure to own. With a complex build like this, the level of teamwork involved to put it together was unparalleled as you cannot see what is being done on the other side of the structure until the fibreglass reaches your side. To see the team working in harmony and making those connections perfectly, like building a bridge on different sides and meeting in the middle, has been gratifying from an operational perspective because it shows the level of talent and execution that we have. One mistake would require starting over, and that never happened on the construction of all 12 water slides. A true engineering feat, the Icon Tower demonstrates how water parks can be skyline defining landmarks that are recognisable the world over.

"We are excited to see guests in the park and know Rixos is going to do a great job running the water park. The combination of a hotel and water park together is one we have seen on the rise over the past years, and we have no doubt that Meryal Waterpark, the Rixos Qetaifan Island North Doha, and Qetaifan Island North - Lusail developments will only help to drive visitation to Qatar as the country continues to grow."



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ETF

# INDOOR ATTRACTIONS

By Emma Bilardi

With a host of digital distractions at our fingertips, families are seeking new ways to foster connection and make meaningful memories.

According to online industry reports, despite rising costs and budget restraints, families are more likely, post-lockdown, to allocate a larger chunk of their budget to experiences that include entertainment and active play for all ages.

With the global family/indoor entertainment centres market valued at a whopping US\$30.9bn in 2022, and projected to grow at a rate of 11.5% from 2023 to 2032 the demand for indoor attractions is strong. But how do operators offer versatility and enriching experiences to such a broad demographic?

InterPark's Features Editor, Emma Bilardi spoke to some of the leading suppliers in the sector to find out.

Leif Peterson, CEO, and Founder of **Hologate**, is a firm believer that smaller venues can still cater to and attract families and thrill seekers alike. "My advice would be to invest in incredible entertainment products with small footprints and high throughput designed to cater to a wide range of interests, ages, and skill levels," he tells InterPark. "The global trend towards indoor attractions continues to gain momentum, especially within the realm of social competitive gaming, a phenomenon that shows no signs of waning in popularity.

"In response, we have delivered a social, multiplayer experience designed to get customers off their couches and into indoor venues where they can enjoy incredible experiences with friends and family."

The next innovations in indoor attractions are poised to push boundaries even further, with the rapid pace of technological growth promising limitless possibilities. "We have seen this progress in our own journey. Our multiplayer platform, Hologate Arena, was the first on the market and helped define the location-based VR

genre. Not only is this system our best-selling product, but it also stands as the world's most successful turnkey multiplayer VR system."

Stephane Battaille, CEO of **Alterface** echoes Peterson's thoughts, saying: "The indoor entertainment sector is undergoing significant changes and continued innovation. There's a growing demand for more personalised and immersive experiences, prompting indoor venues to adapt and innovate. Guests are increasingly seeking interactive and engaging environments that transport them to captivating worlds with strong narratives."

Many indoor venues are however, often limited by size, which naturally restricts the size and scale of attractions compared to outdoor spaces; unlike outdoor attractions that feature towering structures or easily identifiable landmarks, like giant roller coasters, indoor attractions typically lack prominent features. Without these large structures to catch the eye, indoor venues need to rely more heavily on signs and clear communication to guide guests to their experiences.

"Size restrictions definitely necessitate a more compact and efficient design," Battaille continues. "Designers need to maximise the use of available space, while still ensuring a thrilling and engaging experience for guests."

However, one major advantage indoor attractions do have over outdoor is their complete control over the environment. Indoor venues offer full control over environmental factors such as temperature, lighting, and sound. Battaille believes this level of control empowers designers to really unleash their creativity.

"Designers are able to meticulously curate every

aspect of the environment, from the ambiance created by lighting to the mood set by soundscapes, indoor attractions can transport visitors to fantastical worlds and fully engage their senses."

Able to operate year round and unaffected by adverse weather conditions, indoor attractions also ensure a consistent flow of visitors and revenue regardless of season.

In-fact, in regions where heat is prevalent, indoor attractions are thriving, with venues, including theme parks, malls, and entertainment centres, providing a welcome escape from the hot weather, while offering a diverse range of activities.

For Anja D'Hondt, Managing Partner of **Boldmove Nation**, with Europe experiencing more extreme weather events such as heatwaves and heavy rainfall, the importance of indoor attractions is evident. To continue providing enjoyable experiences, parks need to adapt to these changes by including indoor options in their ride portfolio.

Although D'Hondt is keen to extol the virtues of indoor attractions, she does have a practical warning for park operators. "Every park should carefully consider integrating indoor attractions in their park," she says. "There are lots of great benefits, it's weather exempt, you can extend your opening period through winter, it's easier to convey a story and implement new technologies in the ride. But most of the time, having only a few indoor attractions won't dramatically alter visitor's perceptions of your venue.

"Consider investing in an indoor area with at least one big draw-in attraction such as a dark ride or several indoor rides with a food and beverage spot and shop linked to the theme of the area.

"With dark rides such as our Smash & Reload it's also possible to repurpose an existing building. For example, Le PAL in France repurposed their old 4D-cinema, and the dark ride was fitted into the building saving some costs."

Nicole Sangster, Digital Content Producer at media-based attraction specialist **Simworx**, adds further to

this, telling InterPark it all comes down to adaptability and she mirrors the views of D'Hondt around weather benefits. "Indoor venues operate seamlessly despite external weather factors," she says. "In regions with extreme climates, such as the Middle East and Southeast Asia, fully indoor theme parks offer respite from scorching heat, sandstorms, tropical storms and monsoons."

Indoor venues present a distinct set of challenges compared to their outdoor counterparts, primarily revolving around space constraints. Unlike outdoor attractions, indoor spaces grapple with limitations like ceiling height and the need to conform to pre-existing structures not originally designed for specific attractions. However, the operational advantages can outweigh these spatial limitations and ensure consistent customer satisfaction, thus allowing parks to generate revenue throughout the entire year rather than being limited to specific seasons.

"Not only is this financially beneficial in terms of operations but also for upkeep," Sangster continues. "With less erosion and weathering from the elements, rides stay in better condition with less maintenance requirements and touch ups required throughout the year to keep them working like new."

According to Simworx some venues adopt a hybrid approach, featuring predominantly indoor attractions, but incorporating outdoor elements like coaster tracks or water rides.

Christian Martin, Vice-President of Communications and Alliances at **TrioTech** has some sage advice for set up. "For me, there's no hard and fast rules to set up between indoor and outdoor attractions. In both cases they can cover an extremely large area (dark ride, roller coaster), or a very small area (VR game, climbing wall). It's driven by the space rather than indoor vs outdoor," he says. "However, one limitation for indoor attractions is visibility. For instance, a roller coaster can be seen from numerous vantage points in an amusement park. On the other hand, an indoor attraction is, by definition, inside-a-box. Non-participating guests don't see the guests inside the attraction having fun. Of course, theming, cameras, social media and other digital tools can overcome this."



Hologate



Boldmove Nation



Zamperla

For Martin, where indoor attractions really deliver is unique experiences that simply cannot be replicated in a home or outdoor environment. “Guests want to live experiences they can’t replicate at home,” he continues. “They want to be immersed in alternative environments and different world’s. This demand has led to the development of attractions, and indeed of entire zones in theme parks like Harry Potter, or Star Wars that physically, and emotionally take guests to another world.”

For Jos Sloesen, Director of Sales & Marketing at ETF, the industry is going to be shaped by a combination of three things: technological advancements, sustainability, and accessibility. Referring specifically to accessibility and sustainability, Sloesen says: “Many manufacturers are focusing on sustainability in ride design and operation, with the use of eco-friendly materials and energy-efficient technologies to minimise the environmental impact.”

ETF is also seeing accessibility improvements, with more and more of its customers incorporating features to enhance accessibility for a broader range of guests. “All of our ride concepts have the flexibility to integrate specific customer requirements,” Sloesen adds.

Sangster of **Simworx** adds to this, telling InterPark that when it comes to accessibility, it is something outdoor attractions can sometimes lack in design. “The compact nature of indoor attractions, driven by the cost of large buildings, provides accessibility benefits for guests with mobility challenges, whereas outdoor attractions leverage expansive real estate, integrating natural landscapes into their design, which in turn requires more time for guests to traverse between rides,” she says. “Families want to be able to entertain their children no matter the weather, and in some cases a visit to an indoor attraction means the other parent can shop, distraction free, without a bored child in tow.”

It’s clear that indoor attractions can still pack a big punch in a smaller space given the right kind of consideration and creativity, something which **Zamperla** firmly believes. “One of the very important links in our operation chain is research and development,” Marco Antoniazzi, Zamperla’s Sales Manager for The Middle East, Africa, and India explains. “Through this research we’re seeing more indoor venues using advanced



Simworx

technologies and compact layouts to emphasise storytelling. Operators are integrating cutting-edge technologies and interactive elements, to enhance the overall guest experience.”

Antoniazzi tells InterPark he is also seeing more and more venues moving towards increasingly immersive experiences, especially in terms of theming. “Stepping into a theme park is like entering another dimension, and now, entering indoor venues is akin to immersing yourself completely in another world,” he says. “The trend is towards creating captivating and all-encompassing environments that transport visitors to a realm of fantasy and excitement.”

And when it comes to guest profiles, Antoniazzi finds they differ greatly compared to outdoor attraction venues, and that’s partly down to location. “Indoor venues are frequently located near shopping centres, providing a convenient pastime for families during their shopping outings. These venues tend to attract guests looking for a few hours of diverse entertainment, making it a supplementary experience to their shopping activities.

“Indoor venues offer a complete and immersive experience. We find that visitors to parks often allocate a significant amount of time to explore various rides, shows, and attractions, making it a destination for a comprehensive entertainment experience.”

As we emerge from the pandemic and its economic fallout, it’s fair to say, it takes more than just an Instagrammable moment to keep visitors coming back for more. Guests are more discerning than ever, and with the rise in popularity of tech-enhanced experiences, people are looking to play an active role in their attractions.

That’s not to say that classic attractions and beautiful theming don’t have their place. But when it comes to a demographic as wide as this, venues need to embrace interactive technology and the opportunities it presents - making the guest experience more personal, more engaging and ultimately more immersive.

**So what’s new in the indoor attractions sector right now?**

# BOLDMOVE NATION

Despite advancements in home technology, the allure of real-world immersion and narrative experiences are crucial for location-based-entertainment.

To meet the evolving demands of audiences, Boldmove Nation introduced 'Champi'Folies', a media based interactive dark ride, which opened last spring in theme and animal park Le PAL located in the Auvergne region of France.

Developed in collaboration with Triotech, this 'Smash & Reload' ride marks the first indoor attraction in the park and the first installation of the Smash & Reload interactive dark ride concept.

Champi'Folie replaced the Ciné Dynamik 3D-simulator that was located in the same building. The new attraction combines an immersive storyline with thrilling action and impressive theming.

"Smash & Reload features an indoor hub where all the technical components are integrated, from show control to lighting, sound, media, and interactivity." D'Hondt explains.

Theming and storytelling play crucial roles in enhancing the dark ride experience, and Champi'Folies is no exception. Guests embark on a journey with 'TooMush' characters. A new kind of 'species' which provides a seamless transition between the attractions and the animals, re-energizing this area of the park.



The aim is to freeze the Mushies with the shooters, creating an immersive experience best enjoyed where the atmosphere can be controlled.

Driven from their forest by industrial pollution, the stressed out fungi multiply at breakneck speed, approach the city and threaten to invade it. The mission is to put an end to this spectacular invasion, by shooting the mushrooms with the available guns. This has the effect of imprisoning them in blocks of ice and eventually making them disappear.

This is an adventure full of twists and turns to share with family and friends, where everyone can measure their skills and enjoy an immersive and fun experience, with the added bonus of very little downtime for indoor venues.

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# ALTERFACE

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With 20+ years industry experience, Alterface is confident that the key to catering to families and thrill seekers is innovation. One example is 'Action League', an interactive thrill ride specifically designed to address these needs.

Action League offers a highly interactive experience, combining the excitement of interactive shooting, competitive gaming, and the sensation of a rotating platform. For families, this attraction provides engaging experiences suitable for all ages. Its dynamic gameplay and rotating platform offer thrills while maintaining accessibility for younger guests. Families can compete together in a fun and competitive environment.

Featuring an ultra-dynamic multi-axis rotation, the competition takes place in one large room (Action League Arena) where teams duel amongst each other, across three to five different scenes, alternating up to the final winning team.

In the Action League Arena, players are seated on a rotating platform and spin into competitive team vs. team rounds of gameplay.

The attraction is scalable from 36 to 72 players and can be integrated into any infrastructure. An elevated queue design saves space and offers waiting guests a preview of the action, adding to the anticipation and the excitement below.

Alterface's signature Salto show control manages the effects, including shooting, lighting, audio,



animatronics, photo and video content and physical effects.

Action League is fully customisable and can easily be adapted to local tastes and park cultures.

Alterface developed three turnkey theming and media packages, however, bespoke content packages including media, theming, and background story can be tailor-made to client specifications and theming requirements, ranging from purely game-oriented content to more immersive and storytelling-based gameplay.

For example, The Action League Compact Edition was custom-built to provide high levels of interactivity in a space-efficient package, while also boasting easy installation and operation.

# ETF RIDE SYSTEMS

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Netherlands-based ETF Ride Systems was founded in 1998 and since then has become a world leader in trackless dark rides and cutting-edge ride solutions. ETF Ride Systems is part of the ETF Group which was established in 1951.

Prior to 1998, the firm had been indirectly active in the attractions' industry for a number of years, and with over two successful decades under their belt, ETF are well primed to predict the next few years.

Starting 2024 off with a bang, the company has two new dark rides set to open in two high profile locations. A SpongeBob SquarePants experience full of laughs, surprises and jellyfish, located in Las Vegas family-friendly hotel and casino Circus Circus, and the company's 23rd ride for LEGO Discovery centre in Hamburg, Germany this spring.

"It's our 23rd ride in a LEGO Discovery Centre and the excitement feels just as fresh as if it were the first, plus we have plenty of other secrets in the vault, ready to be unveiled," says Jos Sloesen, Director of Sales & Marketing.



# TRIOTECH

The idea of transporting characters to a world they can only view through their television screen led to Triotech developing walkthroughs, like 'Fear The Walking Dead Survival' located in Trans Studio Bali.

A multisensory experience that's part thrill-ride, part interactive motion ride, and part haunted house, this unique walkthrough puts guests right at the heart of an episode from the TV series, offering an on-the-ground experience that really captures the physicality and intense emotion of the series.

The attraction features life-like sets and high-tech interactive motion simulator technology. Sixteen guests per cycle can enter the 10-minute experience with several groups staggered through the attraction.

When guests enter the 'Fear the Walking Dead Survival' experience, they'll find themselves in the heart of a military facility, right when rumours of an unknown, epidemic outbreak are brewing. Guests explore the inner workings of the facility, which includes three distinct thrill zones and various interactive experiences, to face their fears and protect their lives against a bloodthirsty horde of infected zombies.

"We want guests to experience an emotional connection with our creations through immersive gameplay," says Christian Martin, Vice-President of Communications

and Alliances. "We start by developing rich stories, and weave them into a gaming and interactive universe. We blend dynamic games with a ride system capable of supporting the narrative. This is done while respecting operational realities and budgets.

One scene features Triotech's illuio technology, which integrates interactivity with projection mapping on 3D objects. This is the largest deployment of the technology to date, featuring a 16-metre wide by 5-metre high illuio interactive wall.

The entire walkthrough is housed in a highly themed and immersive 400sqm space, with three environments that offer different experiences.



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# SIMWORX

A misconception Simworx would like to address is that indoor attractions only attract children.

"The guest profile is consistent for both indoor and outdoor attractions," says Nicole Sangster, Digital Content Producer. "Larger theme parks draw a similar demographic to their outdoor counterparts, provided the attractions offer comparable thrill levels."

Simworx addresses the need for intense thrills in indoor settings by simulating the same powerful physical forces that teenagers and young adults typically seek with media-based attractions, bridging the gap where massive coaster tracks might be impractical. But how do they do just that? "By focusing on attractions with broad appeal, like family-friendly coasters, media-based experiences, and dark rides that feature cutting-edge technology like intricate animatronics and projection mapping," Sangster continues. "Water rides are also a versatile option for indoor settings."

A prime illustration is Simworx immersive Superflume at Trans Studio Cibubur, a dinosaur themed boat ride. Once the 16-person boat stops, gripped by a motion base, an immersive movie plays and the boat moves up and down and side to side. It's capable of roll, pitch, and yaw and moves in every direction. The boat mirrors the action of the immersive scenes shown. There are wind

effects, sound effects, and water, designed to make people feel as if they are up close to a real dinosaur. According to Simworx, the indoor entertainment sector persists in its trajectory of innovation and enhancement, and this is down to advancements in screen technology, audio experiences, and projection mapping.

"These cutting-edge technologies are reshaping the immersive experience landscape, prompting venues to embrace them and elevate the indoor environment uniquely," says Sangster.



# ZAMPERLA

Zamperla boasts a diverse catalogue of over a hundred rides and attractions that cater to both families and thrill-seekers - WindstarZ is a prime example.

A versatile family ride with a colourful and attractive design, WindstarZ allows riders to be the captains of their own experience by controlling the movement of the sail on their own 'hang glider'.

Guests are seated in a two-person cart - which comfortably and securely accommodate both kids and adults. At the end of each of the 12 arms, riders can find a two seat-cart, which comfortably and securely accommodate both kids and adults.

By pushing and pulling on the triangle shaped control bar in front of them, riders are able to catch the wind, like they're on a real hang glider.

Additionally, a central hydraulic system is used to maintain the balance that gives riders the ability to control their movements, as much or as little as they'd like, during the duration of their ride.

WindstarZ seats 24 passengers and has an hourly capacity of 480 passengers.

A theoretical number that's surprisingly high given its production for some indoor venues was post-lockdown. According to Marco Antoniazzi, Zamperla's Sales Manager for The Middle East, Africa, and India that wasn't much of a concern.



While the pandemic has undoubtedly influenced the operational strategies of indoor venues, necessitating heightened attention to capacity management and social distancing protocols, Antoniazzi maintains that, really, not much has changed at all.

"There has been an increased awareness and implementation of safety measures, but there are no distinctly evident or revolutionary shifts in the fundamental operational practices of indoor attractions. "The industry remains vigilant, adapting to evolving circumstances, and closely monitoring the ongoing situation to ensure the safety and well-being of visitors."

# SIMTEC SYSTEMS

Simtec Systems, manufacturer of customer-specific simulator systems has recently developed the HEXaFLITE mini.

At its most compact it seats four, and has been specially developed for low ceiling heights of six-metres. The system is available with an electric or hydraulic 6DOF motion system and features a rotating cabin, wind, and scent SFX and a dome screen.

The combination of 2D or 3D images, motion impressions and additional special effects such as rain, heat, wind, scent, and seat vibration take guests on a truly immersive journey that can only be replicated in an indoor setting.

"A major advantage of indoor attractions is the opportunity to delve deeper into storytelling." Andreas Stickel, Director of Business Development at Simtec Systems explains. "You can enhance the experience with light, smells and fog and thematise the closed cabins of a ride, according to the story."

The first HEXaFLITE mini installed in Europe was custom-built for Mercury Towers, an iconic new development designed by Zaha Hadid Architects. With 33 floors, it's currently Malta's tallest building.

Featured as InterPark's Project Profile for this issue, the multisensory experience is designed to educate



and celebrate Malta's past and present in 60, engaging and entertaining minutes, the ride features advanced effects like projection mapping, 3D multi-channel sound, smoke, and water effects.

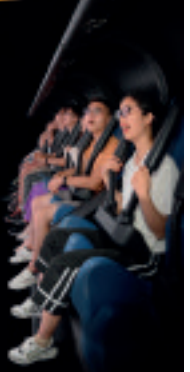
Suitable for the entire family, the HEXaFLITE mini provides special onboard effects thanks to its six-degrees-of-freedom motion platform to take visitors on a magical flight around the islands.

"We're thrilled to have had the opportunity to work with Sarner on this wonderful project," Stickel continues. "It was a challenge for both, Sarner and Simtec, to include such an immersive attraction within the constraints of the available space in the building.

"With our HEXaFLITE mini, specially developed for small spaces, we have managed to meet this challenge. This is our first mini-flying theatre in Europe, and we are very proud to have it installed in Malta."

## HEXaFLITE® mini

# The Soaring adventure



Mini Flying Theater with  
electric or hydraulic 6-DOF  
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System for 4, 8 or 10  
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Special system design for  
limited ceiling heights

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Systems

German innovation in motion

# HOLOGATE

Hologate has, over the years, established a track record of industry recognition by pioneering extended reality, and crafting immersive experiences through advanced XR platforms and software.

In November 2023, Hologate celebrated a remarkable milestone: 20 million VR experiences across its expansive network of 450+ locations across 42 countries. This significant milestone reaffirms the enduring popularity of multiplayer VR.

The company's latest family fuelled addition to the Hologate Arena is Ghostbusters VR Academy - covered in our IAAPA Report in the Jan/ Feb issue - a shared social experience which friends and family of all ages can enjoy together. Players work together as a team in high-risk ghost encounter scenarios, learning how to trap or blow ghosts to smithereens with their proton packs.

Following in the footsteps of the Hologate Arena, the company has also taken location-based VR entertainment to the next level with Hologate Blitz, a motion simulator platform designed from the ground up for flying, racing, and even underwater VR experiences.

The cutting-edge technology transports guests to amazing imaginary VR worlds, whether it be piloting futuristic hover vehicles around floating islands, across desert wastelands, through giant ice caves or taking the Ghostbusters Ecto out for a spin (coming soon!).

With up to one metre of vertical lift and an incredible  $\pm 30^\circ$  range of motion in every direction - Hologate Blitz is the company's premium, six degrees-of-freedom (6DOF), belt driven, interactive driving and flying simulator.

Designed for comfort, Blitz boasts motion tracking with extremely low latency to eliminate motion sickness typically found in traditional simulators.

"Our proprietary code-design and motion-tracking technology optimised the tracking of the player's position rather than calculating the trajectory of the



in-game digital vehicle," says Leif Peterson, CEO, and Founder. "This feat of engineering provided us with 100% tracking accuracy, which produces extremely low latency and the elimination of motion sickness."

Inspired by Formula 1 racing and developed with ease of use and versatility in mind, the steering wheel provides a combination of function, and comfort.

Players are given power through two buttons, while the attendants have the ability to easily switch between two modes, a single-axis steering wheel, and a dual-axis flying mode with steer, push, and pull features.

Hologate Blitz was voted 'Best New Product - Arcade, VR, Redemption & Novelty' at 2023's MENALAC Awards in Dubai. A proud accomplishment for the company.



# PARK INSPECTIONS DUE ON RESTRICTED AREAS AROUND RIDES

By Carl Hagemann, General Manager, ADIPS

**In the next few months, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will carry out safety inspections and there is one issue in particular the regulator will be looking for: how you manage access to restricted or dangerous areas around rides. HSE will test the systems you have by speaking to staff. Larger rides will be looked at, and how visitors are segregated from the devices. Inspectors will give operational guidance during checks, setting out what they will be looking for and the benchmarks they expect operators to hit when managing access to restricted areas. Parks can expect enforcement notices if deficiencies are found.**

So, let's remind ourselves of the things we need to include in our risk assessments for managing access to these areas. First of all, HSE advises that your assessment should identify appropriate control measures, such as:

- barriers, railings, fencing and guarding
- interlocks or locking-off points and procedures
- platforms
- steps
- marking danger zones
- notices
- staff training
- supervision

You will usually need more than one control measure to manage access. HSE is planning around 50 visits to fixed sites in 2024 and will be looking for robust controls, so consider how comprehensive your measures are. Where your control measures include supervision, operators should get appropriate training. You have a responsibility to ensure the safety of your staff as well as the public and this includes making sure a person cannot be struck by the moving parts of a device.

## **Barriers, railings, fencing and guarding**

The most effective way of preventing access to danger areas or dangerous parts is by installing a suitable barrier. If it protects an edge from which somebody could be injured if they fell, it should comply with relevant standards and should be designed both to prevent people from becoming trapped in or falling through them and to discourage attempts to climb, for example by using vertical rails.

Barriers and fences should be arranged so there are no gaps under or between individual parts that people could get through. We need to keep access points between barriers to the minimum size and number needed for safe loading and unloading as identified by our risk assessments.

At the same time, do not have more access points than you need for the safe operation of the device, nor make



them so wide as to defeat the point of having barriers, or make effective supervision of the gap impracticable.

While the device is in motion, prevent people from passing through gaps in barriers unintentionally by placing an attendant at a safe position at each access point or effectively barring the access gaps, and providing the access points with offset barriers/and or steps.

At our recent meeting with HSE, we viewed video footage of a visitor on a ride clipping a barrier with their foot. The barrier had been leant on by a member of the public, pushing it into the safety envelope of the device. The visitor escaped injury but the incident illustrated the importance of ensuring the barriers themselves are safely used. If parts of the ride swing out over public areas, these areas may need to be enclosed where any moving part of the device or a passenger will be less than 2.5-metres above the ground.

## **Other advice on restricted areas**

Highlight danger areas by notices, painted lines etc. Provide sufficient supervision to make sure that people do not stray into danger areas.

Where appropriate, provide a safe area for waiting members of the public and make arrangements to control them. These may include providing additional supervision and/or features such as queuing rails and gates.

On dark rides, provide emergency exit routes which are well-lit and signed when required.

Control risks to prevent tripping or falling, particularly where the routes cross or run alongside rail tracks.

This year will see a series of inspections by HSE across fixed sites, including theme parks. Alongside this, ADIPS inspection bodies will be visiting parks to make sure your rides and other devices are being operated safely.

## CHLOE HAUSFELD, GLOBAL DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE THEMED ENTERTAINMENT ASSOCIATION



Editor Beth Whitaker, speaks with Chloe Hausfeld about her new role within the TEA and discovers what makes this industry so special for her.

### **WHEN DID YOU FIRST START WORKING IN THE PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS INDUSTRY?**

I was lucky to grow up in this amazing industry. However, I began my official journey when I joined the team at JRA (now part of RWS Global) after graduating from college. Starting as Keith James' Executive Assistant and then transitioning into Marketing & Business Development. During my tenure there, I moved from Director to Vice President, expanding my responsibilities to involve strategic initiatives, fostering relationships with clients, and driving business growth. The experiences I shared with the JRA team provided me with invaluable insights and skills to lay the groundwork for my career in the themed entertainment industry.

### **WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR CAREER HIGHLIGHTS?**

Joining the team at JRA was a dream come true. It wasn't just a career move, it was the start of a personal journey, filled with meaningful connections and memories. As Keith James' daughter, I spent many years visiting the office, and the amazing people that filled it. Having the opportunity to contribute to the legacy of a company that holds such significance for me is something that I will always cherish.

I have also had the privilege of serving on the committee for Give Kids the World and IAAPA since 2017. The main purpose of this committee is to assist in planning the fundraising events for GKTW that take place during IAAPA Expo week, in Orlando. Because of my close ties, and adoration for GKTW, when I was pregnant with my

first son Fletcher, we (thanks to Kyle Morey, Linda Round & Roberta Perry) created a fundraising event guessing game for the pregnancy, with proceeds going to the Village. Later that year, I got to walk through the Village, with Fletch attached to me in his carrier, and my mother at my side. He won't ever remember it, but sharing that with him, instilling the values of compassion and giving back, and showing him why we all go to work every day from an early age was extremely special.

As well as this, in 2016, Keith James was TEA's recipient of the Buzz Price Thea Award Recognising a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievement. Being a member of the group that introduced him was an honour of a lifetime in and of itself, and a memory I hold very dear. Coming full circle, I now get to assist in creating similar meaningful memories for others within this amazing community as a member of the TEA team!

### **WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WORKING WITHIN THE PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS INDUSTRY?**

I get asked this a lot, and always have the same (possibly cliché) answer... The people. As mentioned, it may be "cliché, but it's true.

The industry, as a whole, is rather glamorous. Especially from the outside looking in. It is interesting, fun, and certainly much different from what most of our family and friends (outside of the industry) are used to. The nature of entertainment, with its global reach and round-the-clock demands, requires a level of commitment and resilience beyond the typical 9-5 job. Often, there is no "off button", and we have to power



Wonder of the World

through with grit to get through long projects and demanding schedules.

We couldn't do what we do without the support of fantastic teams. The people that we meet along the way turn into life-long friends, and confidants. At the end of the day, it's most glamorous because of each and every one of them.

**WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES WITHIN THE INDUSTRY THAT YOU HAVE SEEN?**

The industry is continuously evolving, and some of the most rapid changes we continue to see revolve around the integration of technology, gamification, sustainability, and accessibility. The rapid advancement of technology has allowed for increasingly immersive and interactive experiences within entertainment, including incorporating elements of gaming into attractions and experiences as a popular trend. Companies are increasingly adopting sustainable practices in both the design and operation of attractions and facilities while also ensuring that attractions and experiences are accessible to all guests. By embracing these trends and incorporating them into design and operations, destinations can stay relevant and appealing to a diverse audience while also contributing positively to the environment and society.

**WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES THE INDUSTRY IS FACING RIGHT NOW?**

Staffing is a significant challenge across various sectors of the industry, encompassing creative, production, and operational roles. It's not merely of quantity but also quality, as finding skilled and experienced individuals who are passionate about the industry can be challenging.

On top of that, there's a noticeable "changing of the guard" occurring within the industry, as experienced professionals retire, transition to other roles, or worse. This loss of institutional knowledge and expertise poses a risk to the continuity and innovation within our entertainment community.

**WHEN DID YOU FIRST BECOME INVOLVED IN TEA AND WHAT WERE YOUR REASONS FOR JOINING?**

I've been lucky enough to take part in TEA events for most of my life due to my family's involvement in the industry. That said, I have been able to participate on a professional level since joining the JRA team, attending the then TEA Summit and Theas Gala yearly, as well as Global SATES throughout the years, and several different yearly regional events.

We had a number of steady committee and board participants on our team, so I didn't join in that capacity, but supported their initiatives, and engaged as a member as much as possible. I love the industry, and know that the best way to learn, and meet people, is to get involved as much as possible. TEA's mission literally includes bringing creators together to share knowledge, to collaborate, to celebrate, and more. It's always been important to me to make my own name in the industry, and the connections I've made in this community have begun to make that a possibility.

**TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR WORK AS A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM?**

My position plays a critical role in helping us to reach the association's strategic, operational, and financial goals. A key focus is the generation and growth of non-dues revenue streams from the industry through the development and delivery of sales strategies and the expansion of our partnerships.



JRA Booth

My immediate goal has been locking in our trusted, and new Global Partners for 2024, as well as spearheading our efforts for INSPIRE Week and the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards Gala. It's been a busy few months, but our members are phenomenal, and we're excited to provide an exceptional week for them, and our guests alike. The relationships and industry knowledge that I have gained throughout my career has helped make it possible for me to dive in, headfirst, and embrace this amazing ride!

#### **IN YOUR NEW ROLE OF GLOBAL DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS, WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO MOST?**

Continuing to serve as the liaison to our members, and the industry as a whole. Leading the association's efforts in identifying and prioritising key strategic partnerships and industry alignments was a key contributing factor in joining the team, and I'm anxious to focus on the strategy-side of my efforts.

#### **WHAT DO YOU FEEL YOU BRING TO THE ROLE THAT'S UNIQUE?**

In this position, it's extremely important to maintain a collaborative approach with all constituent groups, including TEA staff, board members, association members, volunteers, and vendors, all while demonstrating a sincere commitment to the industry. In order to continue to build this community, having the ability to navigate in a highly political environment, while exercising good judgement is what supports the maintenance of these connections. Coming onto the Team, after previously spending my involvement as a member, lends itself to seeing opportunities from multiple angles, while putting an emphasis on making sure that strategies are pulled together that are mutually beneficial to all. It's about seeing the bigger picture and recognising that the strength of the association lies in the collective success and satisfaction of all its constituent groups.

I hope to continue to leverage my unique perspective and commitment to the community. Understanding the needs of our members, identifying growth opportunities in new markets, and assisting in guiding TEA towards continued growth and success, ensuring it remains a vibrant and inclusive community at the forefront of the industry.

#### **WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS OF TEA?**

While TEA members receive countless benefits, including networking events, global resources, educational opportunities, and exclusive access, it's the community aspect that holds the most value. This community not only fosters professional growth and opportunities but also personal connections that enrich the experience of being part of this amazing industry. Learning from industry leaders and considering them peers is a unique aspect of the TEA community, making it possible for newcomers and veterans alike to share, learn, and grow together. This accessibility to thought leadership and mentorship is what makes the industry not just innovative but also welcoming and supportive.

It's easy to want to work hard, when you get the ability to play hard with the best of the best in the industry. TEA celebrates creativity, hard work, and fun, making it an incredibly rewarding team to be a part of. The relationships and networks formed within TEA are not just professional ties but often evolve into lifelong friendships, making the hard work even more worthwhile.

#### **HOW WILL THE TEA CONTINUE TO EVOLVE?**

The creation of my role within TEA signifies the organisation's commitment to growth and its dedication to providing value for its members. This strategic move is a clear indication of TEA's forward-thinking approach, aiming to not only support our current member base but also to expand our influence and reach within the industry.

We are focusing on creating more opportunities for our members to showcase their talent, not only allowing members to gain visibility and recognition, but also fostering an environment of inspiration and collaboration. Opening up networks and venturing into new markets are equally crucial strategies. By tapping into regions and sectors that have been underexplored, we plan to broaden our footprint while also providing our members access to new possibilities, partnerships, and projects.

TEA works diligently to reward cutting-edge excellence, and expertise, in our industry. We were thrilled to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual TEA Thea Awards Gala in March, at the culmination of INSPIRE Week. The Thea Awards, with our extensive credits list, is a reminder that, while individual talent and hard work are essential, the collective experiences, support, and camaraderie within this community amplify success and make the journey fulfilling. We hope you enjoyed the event, and look forward to seeing you next year!



# Mercury Tower Flying Motion Theatre Ride | Malta

By David Whitworth

The landscape of Malta as a visitor attraction is about to change thanks to a revolutionary flying theatre motion ride.

Located at the newly built Mercury Towers in St Julians, the thrilling attraction will bring the history and beauty of Malta to life through a combination of a dark walk attraction, interactive exhibition, and a flying theatre ride. The cutting-edge project is overseen by leading international experiential design and production experts, Sarner International, and delivered by leading entertainment attractions supplier, Simtec Systems. The Mercury Towers flagship entertainment attraction will take visitors on an immersive and informative journey through the past and present of the beautiful islands of Malta, bringing to life the history and heritage through a delightful fusion between entertainment and education. It is situated inside Mercury Towers,

the iconic new development designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, which is one of Hadid's last designs before her passing in 2016. The tower officially opened on 10 November 2023, showcasing its contemporary twisted architectural design. The first phase of opening includes a three-level shopping mall, a square, and soon, its new flying theatre ride, scheduled to open in the second quarter of this year.

The building has an interesting history - it is a reimagining of the Grade 2 listed Mercury House that dates from 1903. Fast forward to the present day and Mercury Tower is Malta's tallest structure, standing pretty at 121-metres (397ft) tall and soaring to 33 floors.



The tower is made up of residential and hotel space courtesy of the luxury ME Hotel by Meliá as well as a new quarter of retail, public spaces, restaurants, bars, cafes and entertainment.

Once fully operational, Mercury Towers aspires to become a new entertainment, retail and cultural hub in St Julians. The attraction itself is the fruition of a multi-million-pound investment by Mercury, which begins with a multi-show dark walk experience that encompasses the flavour of Malta: from the oldest man made structures in the world to the battles that occurred throughout Europe. Visitors will also learn the story of Mercury House, the site of the attraction and previously an underground control centre - a vital communication hub during WWII - before experiencing a multi-projector show that celebrates Malta in the present day. From a tourist perspective, the attraction will appeal to both local and international audiences, opening with eight language options.

The visit will culminate with a ride on board a custom-built flying theatre designed by Simtec Systems. The flying theatre simulator ride features impressive footage and fascinating on-board elements as riders move on a six-degrees-of-freedom motion platform taking visitors on a flight around the islands. A fully immersive multisensory experience, the attraction lasts for 60 minutes in all, featuring advanced effects that include projection mapping, 3D multi-channel sound, smoke and water effects. "Throughout the creation process, Sarner has collaborated closely with Heritage Malta to ensure the highest level of authenticity," said a spokesperson for Mercury Tower. "This historical accuracy is reflected in the storytelling, the incredible physical scenic recreations, and in the film content which harnesses Mercury's commitment to innovation and technology, by blending live action and Hollywood-level CG visual effects."

Filming took place throughout the Maltese islands and includes aerial footage and filmed reenactment in ultra-high definition 8K. The ride brings together immersive storytelling and informative scene-setting shows thanks to a historical story-led flying theatre ride and immersive special effects to create an attraction that is both educational and entertaining and fully fits into the new generational 'edutainment' sector.



The attraction carries a strong sense of pride and cultural belonging, which Marcel Bonnici, CEO, Mercury Towers echoes: "We are honoured to partner with global leaders Sarner International and Simtec Systems to bring Malta's history to life through this truly unique concept. This groundbreaking attraction embodies our commitment to creating unforgettable moments that cannot be experienced elsewhere - in this case, through a fully immersive cultural attraction, which provides thrilling entertainment while serving as an enriching educational experience. Using immersive storytelling and cutting-edge innovation and technology, this unique concept for Europe is set to stimulate the senses and provide a one-of-a-kind journey through time. The attraction is just one initiative in which Mercury aims to celebrate Malta's heritage and take it into the future."

Meanwhile, Ross Magri, Managing Director, Sarner International, commented: "We are thrilled to be able to bring the rich history, sights, and beautiful nature of Malta to life in this unique attraction, a first for the Maltese islands. This will be a special experience for every visitor. Sarner's expertise shines through this innovative blend of heritage authenticity, theme park entertainment, and engineering brilliance. The attraction serves as the ultimate destination for those seeking an unparalleled multisensory experience that marries historic storytelling with cutting-edge motion and effects. This project underscores Sarner's position as the go-to partner for clients looking to create a truly distinctive and industry-defying attraction."



InterPark also spoke exclusively with Andreas Stickel, Director Business Development, Simtec Systems, at the IAAPA Expo Europe held in Vienna. Stickel has worked with the manufacturer since 2014 and gave his thoughts on the Maltese project.

#### **WHAT ARE YOUR OVERRIDING EMOTIONS OF CREATING THIS FLYING THEATRE?**

Andreas Stickel: "We are thrilled to have the opportunity to work together with Sarner on this wonderful project at Mercury Tower. This is our first mini flying theatre in Europe, and we are very proud to have it installed in Malta!

#### **A RIDE WITHIN A TOWER MUST HAVE BEEN A DIFFICULT BUILD?**

AS: "It was a challenge for both Sarner and Simtec to include such an immersive attraction within the constraints of the available space in the building added to the challenge of building an attraction within the height of Mercury Tower. Therefore, we developed a small flying theatre with our HEXaFLITEmini, built especially for small spaces and small ceilings, and catering for these certain circumstances of condensed physical dimensions. As the main feature on the ride is our big tilting function, we had to find a way to decrease its size to fit into the tower. Therefore, we started discussions with Sarner International to look at the possibilities to integrate a 20-seater flying theatre into the venue in Malta. It was quite a challenge to come up with a viable solution for that very tight space, however our 10-seater HEXaFLITEmini model fitted perfectly for this project.

"When I first saw the plot of the flying theatre there was a big column in the middle of the area and I asked if there was a possibility to move it. Everybody started laughing and then I understood it was one of the four main columns of the new tower they were building that is right in the middle of the theatre space where

our motion attraction would be based! So that was an additional challenge to work out the solution of that space with that big column being there. So, we created two levels where, on each level, one of our HEXaFLITEmini models could be placed. I believe that we managed to meet this challenge quite well and we are looking forward to installing it and taking it into operation and seeing what the reaction of the guests will be.

#### **WHAT OTHER VENUES DOES THE HEXaFLITEmini CATER FOR?**

AS: "With our HEXaFLITEmini Flying Theatre, its compact characteristics are ideally suited for a mall venue which is looking for more and more entertainment to entice people to come to. What was important when we developed the model was that it is still based on the six-degrees-of-freedom motion platform of our bigger HEXaFLITE version while displaying the roots of the company towards flight simulation. It was essential for us to have an experience as close to the real feeling of flying as possible so our HEXaFLITEmini is also based on the six-degree dynamic motion system.

#### **WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN SIMTEC SYSTEMS?**

AS: "I am responsible for the area of business development for any new market approaches, our products and taking care of our subsidiary in Shanghai and the new subsidiary that we founded last year in Orlando for the North American market.

#### **TELL US ABOUT THE ETHOS OF SIMTEC SYSTEMS**

AS: "Simtec Systems is a German manufacturer which produces first-class, high-end entertainment motion systems of dark rides and interactive theatres such as our HEXaFLITE Flying Theatre, a very successful ride which has nearly 20 sales. We also produce open and closed FUNRIDE motion-based systems. We have been in the industry for more than 30 years.



# “LUNACY AROUND AND AROUND....THE CAROUSEL!”

By: Dennis Spiegel

Some would say that the world has gone absolutely stark-raving mad. From existing wars, threatening wars, and to here in America, the political lunacy going on in presidential campaigns, all have generated asinine accusations. I could list 50 ludicrous examples of strange happenings in the world today, but as I write this article, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), has just made an announcement requesting that an American ride manufacturing company (Chance Rides of Wichita, Kansas) should stop and end the manufacturing and sale of animal themed carousels. This has to be one of the most idiotic overtures PETA has ever made. PETA stated in a letter to Chance that animal themed carousels unintentionally celebrate the exploitation of “sentiment beings”, a term that includes every conscious creature on earth, from earth worms to humans.

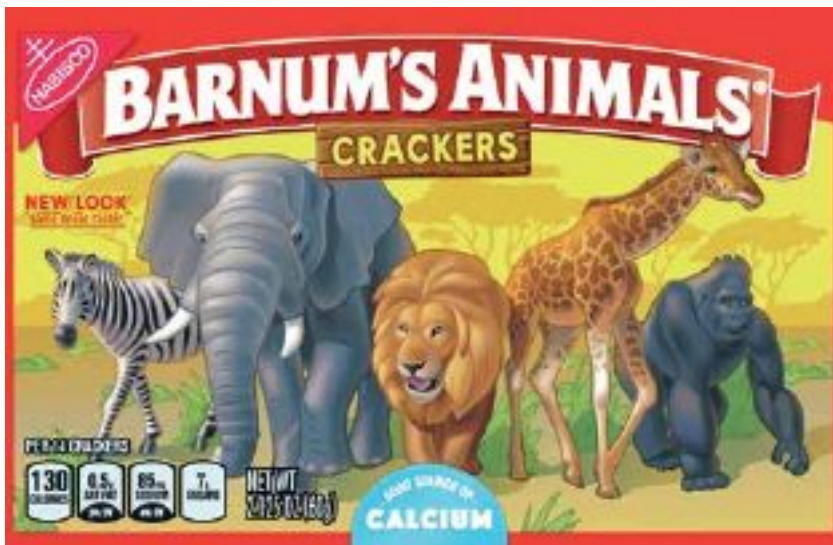
In my opinion, PETA has been out of control for years, as evident from their campaigns. I think of their “Santa’s not coming this year” campaign, indicating that milk from cows is making Santa impotent and kids should leave out cookies with soya milk instead. Then, PETA had a campaign saying that autism could be generated by drinking milk! And one of their all-time greats is when PETA campaigned against Mario Bros and Pokemon for their evil turtle-smashing in their video games!

But in my mind, nothing ranks with PETA’s letter to Chance Manufacturing stating to cease and desist on making carousels with horses and other various animals. A funny response to the PETA absurdity came

from Dutch fairground operator Nico Eckelboom from Gelderland Village in Berg en Dal, Netherlands. Known for their sense of humour in the Netherlands, Meneer Eckelboom removed several of his carousel horses from the ride and placed them in a local meadow as if they were freely romping and enjoying their freedom. Saying “PETA’s proposal was a source of inspiration”. Meneer Eckelboom said, “The Merry Go Round horses have been put out to pasture... We gave the wooden animals back the freedom they deserve.”

Those of us in the industry know that carousels date back to the 6th Century. In the 12th Century, the popularity of jousting and cavalry games added horses and other animal figurines to the merry go round. During the 18th and 19th centuries, carousel horses became a fairground staple across Europe and rotating platforms were introduced. Carousels as we know them today date back to 1861 when the first steam-powered carousel was invented in England. From that, the golden age of carousels began in the 19th Century when the concept was exported from Europe to the United States. It was at this time that the carousels became larger with elaborate craftsmanship and the continuing addition of exotic animals along with traditional horses.

Today, the National Carousel Association website in North America lists about 380 carousels. Just in America, it is estimated that over 17 billion rides have been taken by families on carousels since their introduction.



If PETA's recent US announcement had come out on April 1, 2024, I would think it was an April Fool's joke put out by someone. But it's not. As I said earlier, PETA has been out of control since its inception. They have impacted landmark companies such as Nabisco, Trader Joe's, and others. They got Nabisco to change the design on their animal cracker box from animals in cages at circuses to animals roaming free. At Trader Joe's, PETA had them re-design several of their products, so they no longer presented elephants performing tricks. Worthwhile? Who knows? But, expensive for the companies.

Of course, we all remember 12-15 years ago, when PETA almost destroyed the SeaWorld organisation through much of their reporting on the handling of orcas and other sea life within the SeaWorld organisation.

For PETA to generate awareness and publicity, the fact that they had to stoop to the ridiculousness of requesting that animal themed carousels be banned in the United States, Europe, and around the world is truly insane! As pointed out, carousels have provided billions of smiles and memories for generation after generation of families. In my entire history associated with the amusement park industry, no one has ever said, "Dennis you are abusing your carousel horses... STOP IT!" And this is my message to PETA... STOP IT! This is ludicrous, and makes absolutely no sense. What next? Are they going to throw red paint on carousel horses around the world? Fanatics and zealots need to be put in their place, and to put them in their place, companies such as Nabisco and others need to just say NO and fight back.

As I said at the outset, the world has gone absolutely stark-raving mad. And we are allowing it to happen. It's time we stop it when we can, where we can, and however we can. I do not for one moment believe that removing animals from carousels or merry-go-rounds is going to improve the world in which we live, work and play. In fact, I think it has a negative impact. Memories and smiles are very important, particularly in this current world!

PETA, get a life!

#### About ITPS

#### ITPS....."WHERE FUN IS A SERIOUS BUSINESS,"

is globally the leisure industry's leading independent, full-service consulting firm. Founded by Dennis Spiegel in 1983 and located in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA, ITPS is uniquely qualified to assist in all aspects of leisure project development and has worked on over 500 projects and in over 55 countries since its inception. Always on the forefront of new trends, ITPS is experienced to assist in all aspects of any new project or existing facility. They can be reached at [itps@interthemepark.com](mailto:itps@interthemepark.com). ITPS is celebrating 41 years of service to the amusement industry in 2024



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**Cincinnati, Ohio 45206**  
**USA**



# CALENDAR

## May 7 - 9. 2024

**Saudi Entertainment & Amusement Expo,**  
Riyadh Front Exhibition & Convention &  
Centre, Riyadh, SAUDI ARABIA  
Contact: DMG Events  
Tel: +971 448 0355  
Email: info@dmgevents.com  
www.saudientertainmentexpo.com

## May 10 - 12 2024

**2024 ASIA AMUSEMENT & ATTRACTIONS EXPO,**  
China Import & Export Fair Complex,  
Guangzhou, CHINA  
Contact: Tina Chang  
Email: sales@grandeurhk.com  
Website: aaaexpos.com

## May 28 - 30

**IAAPA Expo Asia 2024,**  
Queen Sirikit National Convention  
Center, Bangkok, THAILAND  
Contact: International Association of  
Amusement Parks & Attractions, 4155  
West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando,  
Florida, USA  
Tel: +1 321 319 7600  
Fax: +1 321 319 7690  
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org  
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-asia

## July 3 - 5

**LIVE!NT, Events & Amusement Expo Tokyo,**  
Tokyo Big Sight, Tokyo, JAPAN  
Contact: Rx Japan Ltd.  
Tel: +813 3349 8510  
Email: live-expo.eng.jp@rxglobal.com  
www.livent-expo.jp/hub/en-gb/exhibit/  
event.html

## July 18 - 20

**Philippine Attraction & Amusement Expo**  
2024, World Trade Centre Metro Manila,  
PHILIPPINES  
Contact: HQ Bizlink International Pte Ltd,  
Email: mail@hqbizlinkintl.com  
www.pa-expo.net



## August 28 - 29

**Theme Park - Water Park Expo Vietnam**  
2024, Tan Son Nhat Pavilion Convention  
Center, Ho Chi Minh City, VIETNAM  
Contact: Fireworks Trade Media Co.,  
Ltd. 18th floor, Indochina Park Tower  
4, Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Da Kao Ward,  
District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, VIETNAM  
Tel: +84 28 6654 9268  
Email: viet@fireworksviet.com  
www.themeparkvietnam.com

## September 3 - 5

**Thailand Amusement & Attraction Parks Expo**  
(TAAPE),  
Impact Exhibition Centre, Bangkok,  
THAILAND  
Contact: Guangdong Grandeur  
International Exhibition Group, 7/F, Block  
C, Poly World Trade Centre, No. 1000  
Xingangdong Road, Haizhu District,  
Guangzhou, China  
Tel: 13104892856  
Email: Sales@grandeurhk.com  
Website: www.taapeexpo.com

## September 24 - 26

**IAAPA Expo Europe,**  
Amsterdam, NETHERLANDS  
Contact: International Association of  
Amusement Parks & Attractions, 4155  
West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando,  
Florida, USA  
Tel: +1 321 319 7600  
Fax: +1 321 319 7690  
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org  
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-europe



## October 16 - 18

**Leisure Japan 2024,**  
Tokyo Big Sight - South Hall, Tokyo,  
JAPAN  
Contact: TSO International Inc.  
Tel: +81 3 5363 1701  
Email: info@leisure-japan.jp  
www.leisure-japan.jp/en/

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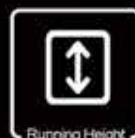
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